



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**
Douglas B. MacDonald
Secretary of Transportation

Transportation Building
310 Maple Park Avenue S.E.
P.O. Box 47300
Olympia, WA 98504-7300
360-705-7000
TTY: 1-800-833-6388
www.wsdot.wa.gov

August 2, 2005

**Regional Transportation Council
RECEIVED**

AUG - 8 2005

Southwest Washington RTC
1300 Franklin Street
PO Box 1366
Vancouver, WA 98666-1366

Dear Arch Miller:

This letter is to inform the members of the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) concurs with the RTC recommendation to conclude the Vancouver HOV lane pilot project and will be converting the lane back to a general purpose lane by August 6, 2005.

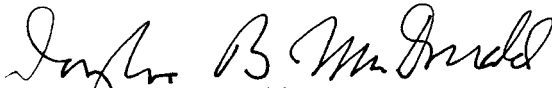
While the data collected on performance criteria over the past four and one half years has shown modest success in several areas, drivers in the Vancouver area are not seeing the level of benefits expected when the pilot was initiated. Meanwhile, overall congestion in the area has increased and drivers are experiencing increased travel times in both the general purpose and HOV lane.

The Vancouver HOV lane pilot project has proven successful in that it has provided important insights that we plan to apply to future projects in the region, particularly as we move forward with our Oregon counterparts in the Columbia River Crossing project. Perhaps the most significant lesson coming out of this project is that to maximize the effectiveness of an HOV lane in reducing congestion, it must be part of a larger *system* designed to manage traffic and increase the flow of vehicles during peak traffic hours. We have seen success with HOV lane use in the Central Puget Sound, where the entire traffic management system works in a way that encourages travelers to use more efficient options.

In the case of the Vancouver HOV lane, we believe the lane is too short and too isolated to provide notable travel time savings and induce the type of behaviors that reduce the number of vehicles on the road during the most traffic laden part of the day, such as carpooling and increased use of transit options. As transit options improve in the region and improvements to traffic to the south are made, a regional traffic management system will be more effective.

I must emphasize our decision to end the HOV lane pilot project in no way represents diminished support in WSDOT for finding ways to more effectively manage traffic on our state's most congested roadways. The lessons we have learned will help inform our work as we begin to explore long-term congestion solutions, including the potential for managed lanes in some form, as part of the Columbia River Crossing project. We remain strongly committed to the principle of efficient use of our highway system and the highly successful HOV programs we have established in other regions of the state, such as the Central Puget Sound region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas B. MacDonald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Douglas" being more prominent and the last name "MacDonald" following in a similar style.

Douglas B. MacDonald
Secretary of Transportation

DBM:jaa